



Minutes City Council Education and Technology Advancement Committee April 12, 2007

Minutes of the Special Council Education and Technology Advancement Committee meeting held on April 12, 2007, 1:00 p.m., in the Third Floor Conference Room, Tempe, Arizona.

Committee Members Present:

Councilmember Onnie Shekerjian, Chair
Councilmember Barb Carter

City Staff Present:

Shelley Hearn, Community Relations Mgr
Sheri Partridge, Council Aide
Nikki Ripley, Media Relations Dir

Guests Present:

Kate Glenn, Registrar, Tempe High School
Zita Johnson, Tempe Union High School District Board
John Melis, Librarian, Tempe High School
Shirley Miles, Tempe Union High School District

Councilmember Shekerjian called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Agenda Item #1 – IB Program Discussion 0109-14

Councilmember Shekerjian stated that she felt that there is a large concern with the International Baccalaureate (IB) program among teachers because of the budget issues.

Nikki Ripley explained that an editorial could be submitted to the newspapers and it is in their discretion whether to publish it or not. These types of editorials are sent to the Tempe section of the *Arizona Republic*, the *East Valley Tribune*, the *Wrangler News* and *Tempe Town News*. An email to all users in the schools would also be a possibility.

Zita Johnson was concerned about how negative and deceptive this sounds at this point. She would hope to move forward with a more positive spin. Probably 95% of the people who read the "My Turn" columns don't know and don't care about myth-type things. She thought it would

be good to get information out about the IB program but instead of the ten myths, it could be a wonderful story about IB.

Councilmember Shekerjian suggested looking at the myths to determine ways to make them positive.

Councilmember Carter added that most of the negative comments she has heard came from teachers/administrators/public. Because she didn't think the City should be funding a program like this doesn't mean that she doesn't believe in the program, and she commended Councilmember Shekerjian for trying to move forward in whatever fashion she can.

Councilmember Shekerjian added that the City funding is a separate issue from today's discussion. Her point in writing an article is to correct misinformation and ease anxiety. Whatever the group feels is the best way to get accurate information out there, that's her goal in co-authoring an article.

Kate Glenn summarized basic information for an article. The IB program is a non-profit organization, assisting high schools in developing rigorous, college-prep curriculums. It has existed since 1968 at the high school level, and more recently has expanded to include elementary and middle school programs. It currently works with 1989 schools in 125 different countries. College and universities throughout the world recognize the IB diploma as a strong indicator of achievement.

The following myths and misconceptions of the IB program were discussed:

- IB represents a duplicate gifted education program for TUHSD, an area already addressed by the district's school-within-a-school for gifted students, Peggy Payne Academy, and each high school's gifted program.
- IB should be housed at a district school other than the proposed Tempe High because there are larger gifted programs at several of the other district schools.
- IB is an elitist program available only to a small minority of students.
- IB will benefit only those students and teachers directly involved in the program.
- IB is very expensive and should not be considered during the tough economic times that TUHSD is currently experiencing.
- TUHSD will cut district programs in order to fund IB.
- No new programs like IB should be started at THS as the district intends to close the school.
- The City of Tempe is driving TUHSD's IB program.
- TUHSD is a state-recognized leader in high school education. It does not need to do anything extraordinary to attract students and/or exceptional teachers.
- IB teaches un-American ideas and values.

Councilmember Shekerjian suggested focusing on the facts rather than on the myths and misconceptions.

Councilmember Carter distributed a list of written comments she has received. The comments generally concerned:

- The program is fiscally irresponsible.
- The promotion of this program is simply to save Tempe High.
- The program is a redundancy of services and forgets the “average kid.”
- Tempe High is not the place for this program.
- Those teaching IB would have to totally “buy into” the extensive and intensive teacher training that is involved and students would have to “buy into” the whole program. One does not take an IB class or two. It is a school philosophy and a single curricular model.
- AP is a better investment because it is less risky; and students are not bound to a curricular model for all courses they take. With the extensive offerings of AP curricula throughout the district, kids can take just about any class they want.
- IB is simply another way to “spin” Tempe High’s worth. It is not necessary.
- IB comes with a price tag. How can we afford another new program with declining enrollment?
- If kids are looking for IB, then there’s Chandler High or Westwood. It’s a waste of money.

There was discussion concerning the comments.

Shelley Hearn suggested that the article be based around how this benefits our community, Tempe, and the students at Tempe High. A lot of the myths seem to be directed more toward school staff and, while the myths might not be appropriate to include in an article, they might be helpful to distribute to school staff to dispel possible myths or misconceptions. The public needs to be educated in what the program can do for their children and for the community. An article should be more focused on what the program is.

Ms. Johnson suggested a memo format for staff and an article format for the public.

Councilmember Shekerjian suggested contacting David Shapira to write about his experience with IB, both from a student perspective and a teacher perspective. This is about teaching staff and people in the district who have an issue with the IB. The article for the newspaper should have a more positive side, showing that it is great for Tempe.

Ms. Johnson suggested contacting Tricia Nash at ASU whose office supports public high schools in developing great programs.

Councilmember Carter supported finding a high school student, now in college, who went through a program. There are also honest money concerns. She has heard it many times that the gifted program is being cut. These kinds of concerns come more from the district than the general public. The main audience is the school district staff and it would be important to get accurate information to them via a district memo.

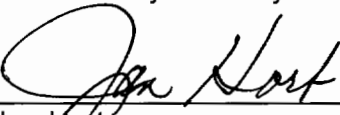
Shelley Hearn added that if this goes forward to Council to request funds, the article needs to address the overall benefit of IB to the Tempe community. That will help people see why the City is supporting this with dollars. This would go into the Council packet with the request for the funds, and the media would pick it up from there.

Councilmember Shekerjian summarized that:

-
- School district staff will prepare an internal document for staff.
 - School district staff will contact David Shapira to share his IB experience in his column.
 - City staff will prepare a document to Council about the economic development and IB benefits to be included in the Council packet with the request for funding support.

Meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Prepared by: Connie Krosschell
Reviewed by: Shelley Hearn



Jan Hoft
City Clerk